

LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY

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Surprise!

How Wonderful!

I've read and reread the Rev. Julie Kanaar's article ["Our Relationship with Things" in the July/August LWT]. It was (is) especially meaningful to me, since my dad, who is very sick with cancer, has given me his old violin.

It hasn't been played in 65+ years and had most of its parts missing. Through an article in our local area paper, I found an old man who fixes violins.

He has fixed it, and soon a lady in our church will play it at a Sunday service, which will be cablecast to Dad's home.

*Bob Skare
Rio, Wisconsin*

Feminist Agenda, No

It is so obvious that LWT has a feminist, secular agenda, and, while I am feminine and pleased to live out my femaleness to glorify God, I cannot and will not espouse any agenda that is not Christ-centered.

With the exception of last year's Bible study on Hebrews and this year's study by Nestingen, and with the exception of writings of Marj Leegard and a few others, the magazine is offensive to me in its agenda.

A whole issue on violence against women [November LWT]! It reeks of a social agency's position. Where are the devotional-type Scripture-oriented messages of God's love through Christ to all people?

And the article "Remembering Jephthah's Daughter," the Bethel teacher in me cries out, "No! I am not a daughter of Jephthah! I am of the sons and daughters of Abraham." Further, the Bethel concept of "God can use evil for good" applies in all adversities.

My subscription expires in a few months. Hurrah!

*Janet W. Lyso
Sioux Falls, South Dakota*



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Another View on Jephthah's Daughter

[Re "Remembering Jephthah's Daughter,"] Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, considered to have been the outstanding Bible expositor of the 20th century, was once asked, "Did Jephthah really slay his daughter according to his vow in Judges 11?" His answer:]

Jephthah made the vow that whatsoever came to meet him he would offer as a burnt offering. Whatsoever in Hebrew is a masculine word, while the one who came from the house at his return was his daughter. If we read carefully the law of vows (Leviticus 27), we see that every vow made could be redeemed by paying a price to the temple. Jephthah's vow conformed to this law—that is, the thing was dedicated to Jehovah according to Leviticus 27, or if unsuitable for dedication it would be offered in a burnt offering. Jephthah performed his vow by dedicating his daughter to Jehovah by a perpetual virginity, as burnt offering of human sacrifice is distinctly forbidden in the Bible.

Judges 11:39 reinforces the fact that she was dedicated to perpetual virginity by ending, "and she knew no man" [King James Version]. In verse 38 it states that she went to the mountains with her companions not to bewail her coming sacrifice but to "bewail her virginity."

Jephthah was "brought low" (verse 35) because "she was his only child" (verse 34). He would have no descendants, and since he, himself, was the son of a harlot (verse 1), he

had no full siblings. His vow left him without family.

I believe that the Bible, always accurate and specific to the minutest detail, leaves no doubt about the outcome of Jephthah's vow. I think it is important that readers of LWT realize Jephthah's daughter was not a human sacrifice.

*Roberta Gaetz Palmer
Fairfax, Virginia*

Thanks

Just a note as I renew my subscription to say thank you for the consistent ministry and challenge that LWT has given me, especially in the last five years. It's a spiritual "letter from home" every month and I've really appreciated it! My continued prayers for balance and wisdom.

*Jane Tandy
Kent, England*

Ants and Cinnamon

[Re] the article in the September LWT by Jennifer Young Jarrett on "The Ants Go Marching," I was told two summers ago: [To get rid of ants] "Put cinnamon on small bottle caps, like caps from a milk jug, all around your house—in doorways, cupboards, around your refrigerator, any place. Start putting them out when it starts getting warm, the earlier the better." Hope this [information] helps.

*Alida Riek
Lansing, Iowa*

LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY

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For the benefit of Women of the ELCA participants, articles relating to Women of the ELCA mission areas are marked, at their conclusion, with these symbols: **A**=action, **C**=community and **G**=growth. Unless otherwise cited, all Bible references are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

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I Have Seen the Lord



Stephen P. Gerhard

"Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him'" (John 20:1-2).

They have taken the Lord.

It is no real surprise that Mary said this to Peter and John.

They had been in control for days. They had arrested Jesus. They had mocked him. They had tried him. They had convicted him. They had crucified him. Now they had taken his body away and, not surprisingly, they had not told any of his friends where they had put it.

Oh, how well we know what it is to stand weeping outside the tombs of our buried hopes, places where they have taken our hope away from us! *They*—faceless often, yet powerful always.

They—competent, good people, yet nameless and faceless, working away in the bowels of a hospital to analyze your tests. They report that you have cancer and that there is little that can be done about it.



Jesus comes to you in the midst of your doubt that any of the wounds *they* inflict on you and on your world can be healed, overcome.

They have read your high-school transcripts and application for admission to the university you were hoping against hope to enter, and they say you have not been granted admission.

They, IRS functionaries who operate out of some cavern in the earth or office building in Memphis, say that you owe a penalty.

They now see themselves as a '90s kind of company and are downsizing, which means they have given you notice after 27 loyal, productive years.

"They have taken him away, and we do not know where they have laid him."

They. The powers of death? The Romans? The high priest's guards? Does it really matter? They have done it. That's the way it is in the world. Accept it and get on with life. Bring the spices to anoint the body, and accept the one final indignity; they

have taken the body. It is final after all, isn't it? Don't all dashed hopes end that way? When taken away, hope turns quickly to grief, disillusionment, and, finally, resignation.

But Mary returned to the tomb, and—for whatever reason—looked in and saw two angels in white who asked her, "Why are you weeping?" And she told them the same thing. "They have taken my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Then she turned, John tells us, and saw Jesus standing there but did not know that it was Jesus. Her mind—vacant of every thought other than that of the loss of Jesus—kept her from seeing the one she was looking for, even though he stood before her eyes. He said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she replied, "If you have taken him, tell me where he is."

THEN, the whole work of salvation—creation, fall from grace, prophetic word, incarnation of God, ministry with the Twelve, death on the cross, and resurrection—was spoken in one word, "Mary!" Her name. And immediately all that God had done for the world from creation through its redemption in Christ was spoken to this one person, in this one word, her name: Mary.

The sole thought that had occupied Mary's hopeless spirit changed instantly from unspeakable loss to inexpressible gain. And she said, "Rabbouni," and went running to tell the others, "I have seen the Lord!"

The fullness of grace was contained in the speaking of one word by Jesus, her name. She encountered the risen shepherd who knows his sheep and whose sheep know him.

And the word quickly spread, from Mary saying, "I have seen the Lord"—to the disciples (minus Thomas) gathered that evening in the Lord's presence saying, "We have seen the Lord"—to Thomas saying, "Unless I see the Lord, I will not believe."

St. Thomas, our teacher. We dare not treat him differently than we treat ourselves. Thomas, who, when he saw, said, "My Lord, and my God." He had to hear the risen Lord speak his name, too. And so must you, and I! For it is the power of Christ's resurrection alone that effects the most needed change in all our lives—the change from what *they* have done to

what you and I have seen. Change from the obsession with what they have done to me in my life, to devotion to what Christ has done for me in my life.

It is a change within: not spending life being concerned about what they have done to me, but spending life in devotion to what I have seen in Christ. To know the power of the resurrection is to say with Mary and Job and all the faithful, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth...I shall see God...my eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19:25-27).

The risen Lord does come to each one of us as he did to Mary—comes to you and speaks your name. In Holy Baptism the Lord spoke your name with undivided, divine attention fixed on you, claiming you for eternity.

Even though you, like Mary, have been with Jesus, disappointed hopes can and probably have clouded your vision. Vision blurred by cataracts of crushed hope makes recognizing Jesus difficult when he appears before you. Until, as with Mary, Jesus speaks your name. Grace. Marshall. Susan. John. Berdene.

And, yes, the risen Christ does appear before you in the midst of your doubt, as he did to Thomas. "Thomas, place your hand here." Thomas, see my wounds: my homeless sisters; my hungry brothers; my sister raising her children alone on a low-paying job; my brother who lives with a problem from his past that he just can't shake.



Vision blurred by cataracts of crushed hope makes recognizing Jesus difficult when he appears before you.



Do you realize how vital a link you are in the witness to the resurrection?

Jesus comes to you in the midst of your doubt that any of the wounds *they* inflict on you and on your world can be healed, overcome. Jesus comes to you from the depths of these problems, from death itself, and says, "You will find trouble in the world—but, never lose heart, I have conquered the world!" (John 16:33 J. B. Phillips)

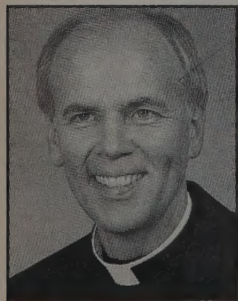
As he did to Mary, Jesus speaks your name. He does so every time the Spirit reminds you of all that the risen Savior has done for you, all that the risen Savior has taught you. The risen Christ speaks your name when he reminds you to forgive, when he strengthens you for the task at hand, when he appoints you to be the advocate for someone who does not have the strength you have. The risen Lord

comes to you and calls you by name.

Do you realize how vital a link you are in the witness to the resurrection? You have been anointed by God through your baptism into Christ's death and resurrection to take your place as one who has seen the risen Lord—joining the great line of people beginning with Mary!

For whatever reason, Mary went back to where they had done their worst, and there saw the Lord when he called her by name. Amid all the power *they* wield in the world, amid the seemingly unsolvable problems—like AIDS, drug abuse, faithlessness, and callousness—you, with Mary, Peter, John, Thomas, are witness to the resurrection, witness to the glorious truth of our lives that Christ has overcome them all. After all that they have done, they have won nothing. Nothing! For on this day the Lord has acted! And therefore you now stand with Mary, Peter, John, Thomas, and all the witnesses of the resurrection, with all the faithful who ever were and are and will be. Because Jesus has called you by name, you can now say with them, "I have seen the Lord!"

Christ is risen! **G**



The Rev. Stephen P. Gerhard is pastor at the Lutheran Church of the Epiphany in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. This article is taken from an Easter sermon preached at Holy Trinity Lutheran, Raleigh, North Carolina, where Pastor Gerhard previously served. He and his wife, Barbara, have two children, Christopher and Meredith.

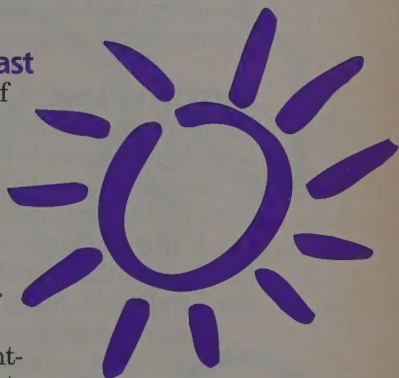
Surprised into Evangelism

Marj Leegard

Surprise! Surprise! Winter does not last forever. Snow is not the be-all and end-all of our lives. And for those lucky folks who live in places of perpetual summer, this is still the season of newness.

Somewhere pussy willows are growing fat. Crocus and cowslip blooms wait beneath the last bits of ice. Some of us may carry the color of winter in our hair, but our spirits soar with the youngest of the young.

Symbols are all around. Lilies. Eggs brightly colored, and eggs of the best color—chocolate. Pretty as eggs are, they are not the story.



Surprise in a Question

One year, a long time ago, we were harvesting until late in the evening. It had been a bumper crop, and the grain bins were full. When the last truckload was ready, someone had to drive to the elevator; others had to milk the cows, and still others had to prepare supper. I was elected to go to the elevator. My small grandson, Scott, decided to go with me. It was not a difficult decision for him. At home, bed waited. At the elevator there was a pop machine.

And so we sat in the dark at the end of a half mile of trucks. I suggested that we take a nap, as it would not be difficult to wake up when all the trucks started to move closer to the elevator. Scott, however, had not come to nap. "Grandma," he said, "how do cows have calves?" I did not know quite where to begin, so I said in my most grandmotherly storytelling voice, "Isn't it wonderful? Ducks have little ducks. Mother chickens have little chickens. Robins have...." Scott interrupted. "Grandma," he said, "I know one thing. Cows do not lay eggs." At that moment

the truck engines all ignited in a mighty roar, and we inched ahead one space.

Budding Surprises

I know what a rose is. I have seen roses. There are pictures of roses in our house. Yet, when my husband, Jerome, goes out in the early morning and beckons me to come, I go barefoot through the cold dew on the grass to see a rose. Each one is new, each one a color never before seen in this exact hue, each bud and bloom is a new surprise.

Surprising Ties

I thought I knew about children. I tended children before the term *baby-sitting* was invented. Still, my own babies surprised me. And now my grandchildren and great-granddaughter surprise me. I thought I understood marriage, but after all these years I have not exhausted the complexities and joys of life with another person.

Surprising Love

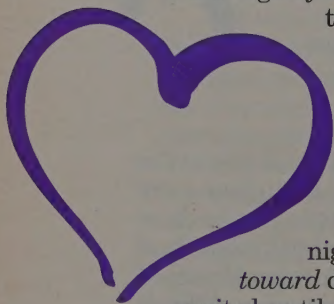
We have come away from the manger in Bethlehem amazed that God should choose to live among us. Now we are coming to the tomb to learn that we can live with God. "So all will be made alive in Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

If this life keeps me surprised, it is not strange that the plan God has for those called "my people" should jolt me into great wonder. I walk with Mary of Magdala and the other Mary to the grave.

I can vaguely understand that walk, for, with many of you, I too have walked that path. There is no other place to go at such times. No other place to find the ones we love. So we go back to the place where we left them—the grave. Because the two Marys were surprised at the grave that morning, we can walk back to life again.

The women must have spent a sleepless night because they were there when it was only *toward* dawn. About daybreak. Most of us would have waited until daylight to leave home for that walk. These were dangerous times. But Mary and Mary were at the tomb early. The authorities had sealed the tomb, set a stone in front, and posted guards. Ordinarily there would have been no recourse, except to leave until they could get help.

Except this was no ordinary day, and no ordinary grave. The surprise was there. An earthquake. An angel. Guards falling into comas. If the guards were lying in a dead faint, why not the women? Because God has for them a holy task. "Go quickly." "Tell." The greatest news in the world. The greatest news in all of time is given to the women to tell. Surprise.



With fear and great joy they ran to tell. With fear, because they could hardly believe they had seen the angel and heard the wonderful news. With fear, because they might not be believed. Yet, in spite of the fear, they were compelled to tell. Our Easter is not complete until evangelism follows surprise.

Seize the Seeds and Sow

Jesus had told them the story of the sower and the seed. When Jesus was teaching, he described himself as the sower. "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man" (Matthew 13:37). And sowers must continue to sow the seed in Jesus' name. Fling out great handfuls of seeds in every direction. More seeds than can be counted. Seeds falling in a great arc from the sweep of the sower's arm. Seeds for growing more seeds, and seeds for nourishment.

We are part of the line of sowers. And springtime is the time for seeds and sowers and God's magnificent bounty. Mary and Mary Magdalene did it. They did it because the miracle of the empty tomb compelled them to share the news. We know the same miracle. Jesus lives. Because Jesus lives, we shall live. We share the news. We manage the "fear" part very well. Of course, we are afraid. *Evangelism* is a word that can frighten us. The news seems too good to be true. And we, too, might not be believed. But God has a holy task for us. "Go and tell," God says. The surprise is that we can tell in our own ways, and in our own places, and in our own moments.

Telling brings joy. Not only to our own hearts but to the lives of those who hear. The word *will be heard*. It is not our concern exactly *when* the word takes root. Our response to God's surprise is to tell. To fling out the word in great abundance. To be part of God's wasteful creation, sowing seeds as far as the arc of our influence reaches. Our response to God's bounty is to tell.

Christ is risen! The winter of our sorrow does not last. He is risen indeed! Go quickly. Tell. **GAC**

WT columnist Marj Leegard, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, is a retired farmer and active writer and speaker. She is member of Bakke-Lund-Richwood Parish.



⁺Easter Surprise

Mark Moller-Gunderson and Mary Ann Moller-Gunderson

We were in the midst of casual conversation with friends at a restaurant. "Where to go during Easter break" was the topic at hand. Living in the Midwest, we longed for a brief respite from below-zero wind chills.

"How about going south?" we mused. We had already taken our children to Walt Disney World, Sea World, and MGM Studios. "Been there, done that," we giggled.

We had also taken our children one spring break for a Washington D.C. plunge into history and government. It was among our best family excursions and was just too good to try to repeat.

We all felt guilty about not taking the children somewhere special for their holiday. "Our children work hard at school all year, and for that matter—we do, too. We can't just stay home!" Pride born of an ugly "mentality of entitlement" revealed its presence in our hearts. Did we all truly believe we deserved a vacation?

The conversation grew deeper, as it often does with true soul mates in

life. "Have you ever noticed that our children seem to be growing their own philosophy of entitlement? Their hands are outstretched much of the time—expecting us as parents and the world around them to meet their every need." We worried whether their attitude reflected our own abundant living. "Maybe it's time to try something different."

So it was that our two families, the Poling-Goldennes and the Moller-Gundersons, decided on a family servant event for Easter break. We would journey to a small town along the Mississippi River that had been devastated by severe flooding the year before. We asked Lutheran Social Services if there was much left to clean up, since an entire year had passed.

"They are still in the initial stages of recovery," we were told. "Sometimes resurrection can take years." This was our first learning on the trip.

We always imagined that a community was back on its feet three or four months after a major disaster.

all of us were unprepared for the widespread devastation we saw in this town that the media, and we, had forgotten long ago.

As we ate pizza together the night before our family servant event began, we decided it was time for a sermonette with the kids. Inevitable, it seems, when all four parents are also Evangelical Lutheran Church in America pastors!) We

asked, "Why do you think we are doing flood cleanup this year, rather than having fun on a Florida beach?"

We expected our children to make the easy link between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our work in flood relief. But the question met with dead silence and grim stares all around. Imm..., we thought, maybe it was time to go to Scripture! We quoted 1 John 3:18: "Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action."

All four children groaned. Surrounded by such enthusiasm, we surmised it might be time to change tactics. No wonder ELCA Servant events for teenagers are modeled on experience *followed by* reflection! The Holy Spirit was gently nudging us to let the children experience the process of death and resurrection—and later ask what God was doing at this time and place during their Easter break.

The next morning we made our way to the small farming community of 524 homes situated nine miles



As part of their family servant event, the Moller-Gundersons and Poling-Goldennes help clean up in a small town devastated by Mississippi River flooding.

inland from the Mississippi River. We were immediately struck by the sight of seaweed and cornstalks hanging from the cross arms and wires of telephone poles. We tried to imagine the force of a flood that reached nine miles inland and as high as the telephone poles. The entire town had been under water!

The river had deposited mud and debris everywhere, twisting everything in its wake. Even now, a



The flood severely damaged the homes in the community.

year later, most homes were still uninhabitable. We found the flood relief headquarters, received our job assignment, and went to work raking and burning debris six inches thick from the enormous yard of an elderly couple. It took all eight of us half a day just to clean one yard. No wonder the recovery process is so slow. Most of the demolition and cleanup work is labor-intensive and tedious.

Lunch was served in the community center for all the townspeople and relief workers. It is their main meal of the day—provided by Christians from churches as far away as 100 miles. Lutheran Social Services had coordinated most of the disaster relief and was still present a year after the flood. A small group of Mennonite men had moved into the community for a year to assist with the rebuilding. By the grace of God, a network was established between churches of every persuasion to feed the hungry in this community. The vast majority of families still had no kitchen in their homes.

We thought of our kitchens, and of how they are the gathering place

for family and friends. So we asked the farmer sitting opposite us at the table, "How have people managed to live for a year without a kitchen?"

He answered, "The people of God have become our kitchen."

They have come every day since the flood to provide us with a meal." Then he asked, "Are you a Christian?"

We nodded yes. Then he went on to talk about the Emmaus Road story from the Bible and how Jesus met the two disciples on the road. He asked us if we remembered that they told others "how he [Jesus] had been made known...in the breaking of the bread" (see Luke 24:32-35). "Well," the farmer continued, "that's how we feel around here. The presence of Jesus is revealed to us day by day, each time we come to the soup kitchen and break bread with the people of faith who have been providing our daily meal."

This man and his wife, and their four grown children, all lost their homes in the flood. We asked the couple how they and their extended family had managed to cope with such profound loss in their lives. The farmer responded, "We have learned that we do not live to ourselves. We live and die to the Lord. It has put everything into perspective for us."

Then the farmer excused himself saying, "I need to head over to the church now. It will take us a couple of days to prepare for the Easter breakfast—and I am the head chef."

We were astounded. "How do you have time even to think about cooking Easter breakfast at the church—when no one in your entire family has a home?"

The farmer laughed and told how the flood had weakened and in some cases even destroyed the systems his family relied on. How it exposed their vulnerability to the tragedies of life. "Yet we still have each other, and by the power of God working through us, we have been raised to new life. The risen Christ has given us strength we never imagined possible. If we cannot welcome the stranger who has come to walk with us in the aftermath of the flood—or feed the hungry who come to worship the risen Christ on Easter morning, then Christ is not at the center of our lives."

As we returned to the cleanup, we realized we had mistakenly thought that we were the strong ones—coming to assist those weakened by a natural disaster. But Jesus had already preceded us. God's holy surprise for us was encountering the depth of faith in survivors of the flood. They were our teachers on this trip.

Now we understood St. Paul's words to the church in Rome: "For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (Romans 1:11-12).

The final home we worked on had a yard resembling a trash heap. We could not believe anyone lived there,

but we were assured that it was a woman's home. At the end of the day, our daughters decided to plant a garden for her. They found spring bulbs that had sent up green shoots through the warming earth, and transplanted them into the woman's garden.



Maria Moller-Gunderson and Jessica Poling-Goldenne plant bulbs to announce "it's Easter—and Jesus has been here."

When we asked the girls why they were planting flowers, Jessica responded, "We want her to know it's Easter—and that Jesus has been here." **GCA**

The Rev. Mary Ann Moller-Gunderson is pastor of Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. The Rev. Mark Moller-Gunderson is executive director of the ELCA's Division for Congregational Ministries.

For help planning a family or youth servant event, you may contact Rod Boriack at the ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries at (800) 638-3522, ext. 2573.

Eleison! Easter Exclamation

Marguerite M. Rourk

Easter Sunday morning. Great big church. Glorious festival worship, magnificent music, Easter triumph, resplendent joy. Resurrection day! The Son has risen, and darkness is no more!

On this beautiful Easter Sunday I am the supply pastor for a parish where it is the custom to commune *all* the baptized. The brightest light in that whole splendid place was the face of Anna. I know that was her name because it was embroidered amid the pastel bunnies and ducklings on the bodice of her dress. Careful to do exactly as her mama did, the three-year-old knelt at the altar rail, lifting and extending her arms up and over the polished dark wood. Two enormous blue orbs looked upward, drinking me in from the hem of my chasuble to my own eyes, and holding me with a steady, radiant gaze. Two little hands cupped into a tiny throne to hold sacred Host and pastor's heart. Heaven joined to earth. The Eternal gathered the temporal in a holy time warp arrayed in curls and a smocked dress.

I said, "Anna, this is the body of Christ given for you."

She said, "I have Jesus!"

Eleison. One enthralled whisper cracked open the tomb and all eternity exploded into *now*.

Eleison

Lord, have mercy. *Eleison!* Easter exclamation! *Eleison*—precious prayer in loving mercy given, for speechless souls to summon greater mercy yet. *Eleison!* Yes, Anna, we have Jesus! Lord, have mercy, yes, we have Jesus!

Oh, Easter joy! Easter truth! Easter life! Easter everything!
AlleluiaAlleluiaAlleluiaAlleluia! Alleluia-without-end!

The pastor was 46 years old that day; the preacher was three. Proclaim the resurrection, Anna! Be truth-teller, light-shiner, gospel-speaker, Word-wearer, name-claimer, Christ-bearer. Proclaim the Easter grace-gift of *eleison*, the most having-mercy that God can do, the most mercy-having that God can be.

† Exsultet

Exsultet is the Latin name for the ancient hymn sung by Christians for millennia at the great vigil of Easter:

*Rejoice, all heavenly hosts
and choirs of angels, and let your
trumpets shout salvation for the
victory of our mighty King.*

*Exult and sing, O earth,...for
darkness has been vanquished
by our eternal King.*

*Be glad also, O mother
church, and...resound with the
praises of your people.*

*Jesus Christ our Lord is the
true Paschal Lamb...who broke the bonds of death and hell, rose
victorious from the grave, and lives and reigns for ever and ever!*

Christendom's most glorious hymn, and Anna offered it in three words: "I have Jesus!"

Eleison, from the
Holy Communion
liturgy.

Kyrie, eleison,
meaning "Lord,
have mercy."

† Easter Energy

It is Easter, and we won't ever have to worry about anything else. "Else" isn't God anyway, so don't waste your time or energy on it. Easter is God's energy. Easter energy is the power by which we can begin each day, newly risen in Christ and confessing, "I have Jesus!"

† Efficient, † Effective, † Eccentric

How efficient of God to effect our salvation once and for all, one expiation for all sin for all time. Easter is completely effective.

Easter is also completely eccentric. Who else but God would—could—have thought up the unthinkable. It really was the only thing left, you know. God had already exhausted all the Plans B for saving us from ourselves. Our salvation history is chock-full of God's marvelously looney ideas for never ever letting us go, for keeping us safe beneath mother-hen wings and secure within the sheepfold of fatherly care. Easter turned out to be the epitome of the divine *whatever works*.

†Elementary, Eternal Exclamation

Easter is God's eternal exclamation that death is dead and Christ is not—and neither are we. At Easter God goes for the elementary: Jesus died and so did our sins; Jesus lives and so do we. After a few thousand eras and eons of relatively complicated salvation geometry (covenants, laws, kings, wars, cloud, fire, matriarchs, patriarchs, progeny, prophets, priests, and promises), the inventor of time and space went for the straight line, that is, the shortest distance between two points:

death \longleftrightarrow life

Elementary. Easter is our eager God empowering us to thumb our noses at death and, like Dr. Luther, to turn our backsides to the devil.

†Ecstatic Ecology

Easter is God's ecstasy. It's the big win over the big enemy who is eternally reduced to sniveling, wheedling, and more elaborate deceptions for rounding up devotees of darkness.

Easter is Easter everywhere, even where folks don't know it or don't care, or reject it, or deny it, or persecute it, or proclaim the rising of some other messiah. As announcing angels say, however, "Do not be afraid," because *each where* belongs to God. God is present each where, and will reveal Easter each where, in God's good time. In no where is Easter ever past: There can be no such thing as "It was Easter," only "It is Easter."

Easter is God's ecology. Each one of us is Eastered into a new edition. In God's ecology, the emancipator encamps among us, tabernacling in our midst to keep us free.

†Enter

Easter is the end, the last epiphany, the final showing-forth before Christ comes again and bids us enter the lamb's high feast. Oh, beloved, what an event that will be, the revelation of our genesis! There, in everlasting Easter, each of us will proclaim with Anna the endless *eleison*, the eternal *exsultet*: "I have Jesus!" **G**

The Rev. Marguerite M. Rourk is director of church relations at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina. Pastor Rourk shares her life with her husband, David. They have two grown sons, Edwin and Matthew.

Waiting Up All Night



Mary Stearns Sgarioto

Go into a church on the Monday after Easter, and chances are many of the Easter lilies will still be there, with a fragrance so powerful it might just overpower you. It is no accident that many of the things associated with church—especially at times of intense celebrative worship—are also associated with love. Think about it: There are flowers, candles, special music, and anticipation.

Easter is the ultimate celebration of life and love, the most splendid rejoicing of the Christian church year, the holiest day of days. And the Easter Vigil is part of the great three days (called the *triduum* in Latin) in which there is continuity from what begins on Maundy Thursday and continues into Good Friday and Holy Saturday—all in preparation for the full splendor of Easter Sunday. The Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday is one of those rare times when contrasts are the focus: darkness becomes light, fear turns into joy.

The vigil was a wonderful surprise for me. As a confirmed night-owl since childhood, I secretly dreaded the Easter sunrise services that everyone else seemed to love. As a young girl, I would

Rejoice, now,
all heavenly choirs of angels,
and celebrate the divine mysteries
with exultation;
and, for the victory
of so great a King,
sound the trumpet of salvation.
Exult, also, O earth,
enlightened with such radiance;
and, made brilliant
by the splendor of the
eternal King,
know that the ancient darkness
has been banished
from all the world.*

* Boxed quotes in this article are taken from the ancient Christian hymn "Exsultet," sung or read at the Easter Vigil. From *Lutheran Book of Worship*, Ministers Desk Edition, © 1978.

Be glad also, O mother Church,
clothed with the brightness
of such a light,
and let this house resound
with the triumphant voices
of the peoples.

Wherefore, dearly beloved,
who stand in the clarity
of this bright and holy light,
join with me, I ask you,
in praising the lovingkindness
of almighty God.

This, indeed, is the night
in which the darkness of sin
has been purged away
by the rising brightness.

This is the night
in which all who believe in Christ
are rescued from evil
and the gloom of sin,
are renewed in grace,
and are restored to holiness.

This is the night in which,
breaking the chains of death,
Christ arises from hell in triumph.

An "order of service"
bulletin, containing the
Easter Vigil service as it
appears in the Ministers
Desk Edition of *LBW* is
available from Augsburg
Fortress for 90¢ each (12 for
\$7), order code LT3-5329.
Call (800) 328-4648 to order.

shiver through the beginning of the service, my white patent-leather purse stuffed with jelly beans and marshmallow chicks, and I would wait for the light—but not happily. It wasn't until I discovered the Easter Vigil that I realized Easter is for night-owls, too.

The Easter Vigil is seeing increased popularity in ELCA congregations. The vigil has four parts: increasing light, readings, baptism, and Holy Communion. The best thing is that this service can be held as late at night as you like. Technically, it needs to be dark for the service, so anytime after sunset is okay. The darkness symbolizes death and the tomb.



The vigil begins

when the Paschal or Easter candle is lit by what is called "new fire"—which today usually means a blaze started in a grill outdoors. The congregation follows the lit candle into the totally dark sanctuary. Slowly, one candle is lit, then a few more. People begin the readings and they remember the people, places, and events that are part of the

Christian story. Often there is a baptism at the vigil and people remember their baptisms. Eventually all the lights are lit—and it is Easter: The celebration of Christ's resurrection begins.

Some congregations include preparing the worship space for the celebration as part of the Easter Vigil. The gathered unveil the cross and decorate the chancel with flowers. Holy Communion is then celebrated. It is an especially joyous moment.

If you can't find a vigil service in your area, don't despair. There is plenty of dark-

ness and, thank God, even more of the light of Christ to go around. Design your own Easter Vigil and have it at home. Stay up all night. Wait for the light of dawn—I mean really wait just to “make sure” it comes. It is worth the waiting, for on this night of nights, the dawn marks the resurrection of Christ!



Gather your family

and friends and light candles one by one. Ask each person to read a biblical text that is meaningful. Have a child tell a Bible story in his or her own words. Remember Christ any way you can, and tell your family or personal stories of faith. Remember the blessedness of creation and your moments of exodus. Recall the particular way your story connects with the story of Christ. Use water and bless each other with the sign of the cross.

In the great tradition of Lutheranism, after the Easter Vigil it is time to eat. Whether the vigil is a church or home celebration, everything should be made especially festive. This is nothing like your usual late-night fare. Ask yourself, “What do I want the family, children, and friends to remember?” A bowl of corn flakes is the wrong answer tonight.

Why not mark Easter this year with a celebration of the Easter Vigil? And why not invite a night-owl friend or two to join you? **CG**

Mary Stearns Sgarioto, Elmhurst, Illinois, is a seminarian at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

This is the night
of which it is written:
“And the night is
as clear as the day”;
and, “then shall my night
be turned into day.”

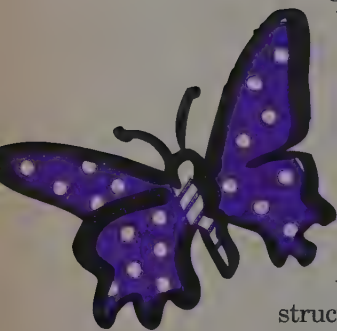
The holiness of this night
puts to flight
the deeds of wickedness;
washes away sin;
restores innocence to the fallen,
and joy to those who mourn;
casts out hate;
brings peace;
and humbles earthly pride.

We, therefore, pray to you, O Lord,
that this candle,
burning to the honor of your name,
will continue to vanquish
the darkness of this night
and be mingled with
the lights of heaven.

May he who is the morning star
find it burning—
that morning star which never sets,
that morning star which,
rising again from the grave,
faithfully sheds light
on all the human race.

Easter Devotional

Linda Post Bushkofsky



We were just a block or two away from Checkpoint Charlie as we walked along a portion of the Berlin Wall still left standing.

Where several buildings of the former East German police once stood there are now exhibits. One exhibit told in pictures and text of the death and destruction that had occurred in that place.

Then, as we left the exhibit, we saw them. Beautiful black butterflies, adorned with colorful markings. There, in that place where there had been so much death and destruction, there was a sign of life and resurrection—the new life given to us through Christ's death and resurrection.

Our travels took us to other towns and cities throughout Germany, and everywhere my husband and I went, we saw these beautiful butterflies. Our travels ended with a weekend in Cologne, visiting a college friend. On Sunday the three of us headed off to church.

It was a hot August morning. The pastor, the organist, 18 worshipers, and one butterfly were in the nave that Sunday. The windows of the church did not open, and everyone was warm. On the next day the world would solemnly mark the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. Worship that morning included many references to World War II and to the peace that Christ brings to the world.

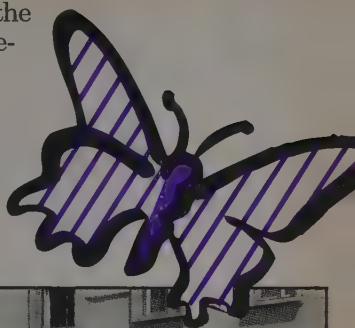
My now-rusty high-school German got me through the liturgy and the hymns, but I couldn't understand all of the pastor's sermon. The heat and the length of

the sermon caused my mind to wander. My eyes caught sight of a butterfly fluttering about the altar and the cross. I followed its flight as it gracefully moved about the chancel.

The sermon ended. The hymn of the day began with a cataclysmic chord that hung in the near-empty nave. That chord, symbolizing the bombing of Hiroshima, called up images of death and destruction. The liturgy continued, and soon the small group of worshipers gathered in a semi-circle for the Eucharist, with the bread and wine on a table before us.

As the pastor said the Words of Institution, the butterfly caught my attention once again. It was near a stained-glass window high in the nave. Brilliant sunlight shone in, and the butterfly was straining toward the light, looking for the freedom of the outdoors.

I was brought back to the bread and the cup I was about to share. As I ate the bread and drank the wine, I thought with joy that here was the freedom I strain for, the gift of Christ found in the Eucharist. I need look no further. **G**



A view of the Berlin Wall from what was formerly West Berlin.



Linda Post Bushkofsky is administrator of communications of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She is a member of St. John Evangelical Lutheran in Whitehall, Pennsylvania, where her husband, Dennis, serves as pastor.

Jesus: The Messiah Among Us

Carolyn Keller



Session 4 The Risen Christ Study Text: John 20:1-18

Memory Verse

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away" (John 20:15).

Overview

Jesus was dead. His humiliation and final agony had been witnessed by all who passed by his cross. Yet on Easter morning, it was not death that Jesus' followers had to face. It was new life! Jesus had been raised from the dead. In this session, we will study John's account of the resurrection and how life could never be the same again for those who witnessed it. We will also ask how the living Lord continues to speak to us today and what it means to live in the hope created by his victory over death.

Opening

The first Sunday of this month is Easter. Pray the Prayer of the Day for that Sunday:

O God, you gave your only Son to suffer death on the cross for our redemption, and by his glorious resurrection you delivered us from the power of death. Make us die every day to sin, so that we may live with him forever in the joy of the resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, pp. 20-21).



The Empty Tomb

John's account of Easter morning begins with Mary Magdalene coming to the tomb while it is still dark. According to John, she had stood near the cross of Jesus with Jesus' mother and aunt, as well as the disciple "whom he loved" (19:25-26). Mary Magdalene witnessed the horror of Jesus' death.

John says that Jesus died before the other two men who were crucified with him. When the soldiers saw that he was dead, they pierced his side with a spear. After this, Joseph of Arimathea received permission to take away Jesus' body. Along with Nicodemus, Joseph wrapped the body with spices in linen cloths and laid it in a nearby tomb in which no one had ever been laid (John 19:38-42). After the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene was the first to go to the tomb.

1. Read John 20:1-2. Describe Mary's initial reaction to the empty tomb.

When Peter and John, "the disciple whom [Jesus] loved," heard Mary's report, they ran to the tomb. John, in his excitement, outran Peter and looked in the tomb. When Peter caught up, he went inside.

2. Read John 20:3-10. What did Peter and John notice about the burial wrappings? What did they think had happened?

Three out of the 18 verses of the Easter story focus on the burial wrappings. Scholars have explained this emphasis as the gospel writer's proof that Jesus' body was not stolen. No one stealing a body would have taken time to unwrap it. Just a few chapters earlier, John had told another resurrection story—the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44). That Jesus' burial wrappings remained behind is in contrast with the raising of Lazarus (11:44). Unlike Jesus, Lazarus came out of the tomb with his hands, feet, and face bound with strips of cloth. Some scholars have suggested that this points to the fact that Lazarus would die again while something completely new happened in Jesus.



John also confesses in 20:9 that Jesus' resurrection was foretold in Scripture, another kind of proof that his body had not been stolen but raised. God's faithfulness had been demonstrated, yet the disciples did not understand what was written.

The Risen Christ

After Peter and John went home, Mary was still standing outside the tomb weeping. She still believed Jesus' body had been taken away by someone.

3. **Read John 20:11-18.** How did Mary recognize Jesus? Compare 20:16 with John 10:3-4. Does the imagery in John 10 fit with Jesus' and Mary's interaction in John 20? How?

The meaning of Jesus' words, "Do not hold on to me," in 20:17 has been interpreted in a variety of ways. The crucial fact is that the resurrection is not a return to Jesus' previous relationship with his followers. Mary cannot cling to Jesus' physical presence. Instead, through Jesus' death and resurrection, Mary and all of Jesus' followers have a new intimacy with God. When Jesus says, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (20:17), there is no distinction between the position of Jesus' followers and Jesus' own status before God. Mary is told to proclaim this to the disciples.

4. Jesus asked a woman to be the first evangelist. Has this had an impact in your life? If so, how?

The Significance of the Resurrection

Jesus was crucified as the King of the Jews (John 19:19). To the government officials, the religious authorities, and people who passed by the cross, Jesus' kingship was laughable. In their minds, no real king would be hanging from a Roman cross. The religious leaders knew for sure that God's real Messiah would never find himself in such a position. The true Messiah would restore Israel's fortunes, not die (see Session 3 in the March LWT). Even the disciples had their doubts (John 18:17), and in the end, they had to come to terms with Jesus' death, or so it seemed.



On Easter morning, the tomb was empty. Life was even more of a surprise than death had been. The awesome authority of Jesus, the living Messiah, shattered all that had seemed so certain. Everyone was wrong—from Pilate who considered Jesus finished business to Mary who stood in front of the tomb weeping. Everything—understanding, expectations, emotions, reality itself—changed in the presence of the living Lord.

5. Read the following texts and write a brief description of who Jesus was revealed to be through the resurrection. Does one of these seem particularly meaningful to you? Why?

Acts 17:31

Romans 1:4

1 Corinthians 15:17-22

Jesus' authority as the Messiah confronts people in all times and places. He is not what we would expect. We create stories of superheroes, but none of them dies on a cross.

Imagine the faces of society's outcasts—the eyes of those who suffer, the hands that are powerless, the voices no one hears. It was one of these faces that rose from the dead. It is one of these faces that will judge us in righteousness (Acts 17:31)—a topic for November's study.

It does not really matter that we cannot touch Jesus' wounds like Thomas (John 20:27-29). When Mary saw Jesus, she thought he was the gardener. He seemed that ordinary. It was his voice, calling her by name, that called her to faith.

Today the living Jesus calls us by name. On the surface, the words of our baptisms, the promises of Holy Communion, the proclamation of the truth in sermons, and our conversations with other Christians may seem ordinary enough—common words we have heard often. But in, with, under, and through those words, the living Jesus is present.

6. Recall these words from the Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness, saying your name in the space provided. What has Jesus said to you in the past, and what is he saying to you now?

“(Name), in the mercy of almighty God,
Jesus Christ was given to die for you, and
for his sake...forgives you all your sins” (*LBW*, p. 56).



The resurrection marks our forgiveness with eternal significance. Our thoughts about ourselves or the opinions of others do not matter ultimately. What counts is the word of the one appointed to judge us in righteousness, Jesus Christ.

7. What is our hope? In the following verses, identify what is promised to us as believers as a result of Christ's death and resurrection.

Romans 6:5

1 Peter 1:3

John 11:25-26

Life That Really Is Life

In 1 Timothy 6:19, eternal life is described as "the life that really is life [beginning now]." Life that seems to end only in death is something else entirely. It is existence controlled by fear, denial, and any number of activities that may make us feel secure, but that lead nowhere ultimately.

8. Read **Ephesians 2:1-10**, where a contrast is made between being "dead through...trespasses" (verse 1) and "alive...with Christ" (verse 5). How does the promise of eternal life—the hope of the resurrection—affect the decisions you make in your life now?

Dealing with Death

Even though as believers we have been given reasons to hope, we still struggle with the fact that eternal life (as we will one day understand it) is beyond us. We all feel vulnerable as we face the deaths of those we love and our own deaths. The process of dying is often very difficult. Death frequently comes before the time seems appropriate. Even Jesus wept when his friend Lazarus died (John 11:35).

In Scripture, faith has the freedom to move back and forth from laments to praise. Doubts and questions are as much a part of believing as blessed assurance. In the Beatitudes, Jesus said those who mourn are blessed, for they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4).

Comfort comes through Word and Sacrament. Over and over again, the living Christ meets us with the promise that life, not death, is the final reality. Comfort also comes through the community of believers.

9. How does your congregation minister to people who are grieving? What words and actions have been meaningful to you in a time of loss?



The priesthood of all believers is crucial to those who mourn. A pastor is only part of God's work of comfort to the bereaved. The funeral is soon over, and a pastor can make only a limited number of visits. The outpouring of love from many people—through casseroles, cards, phone calls, offers to help with specific duties, visits, prayers, ongoing companionship—makes the difference in supporting someone's faith through a difficult time. It takes the whole body of Christ to begin to convey the depths of God's love for us, a love that even death cannot destroy.

Looking Ahead

In Session 5, "The Advocate and Intercessor," we will look at how Jesus continues to pray for those for whom he died. In preparation for that session, **read Hebrews 7:23-28; Romans 8:31-39**, and learn the memory verse: "Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us" (Romans 8:34). **GCA**

About the Author

Writer and speaker Carolyn Keller is a graduate of Luther Northwestern Seminary (now Luther Seminary). She has served as a parish pastor and currently is coordinator of the Growth in Excellence in Ministry Program for the Minneapolis Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She and her husband, the Rev. John V. Keller, have three children, Jonathan (8), Suzanne (6), and Christina (3).

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Surprised by...

Grandmother of "a Jesus"

"Would you like to come to the school program next Wednesday? They're doing the Stations of the Cross, and Joey is going to be a Jesus." With that invitation from my daughter-in-law I became someone important: grandmother of "a Jesus."

I, the lifelong Lutheran, will be happy to attend the Roman Catholic parochial school program to see my seven-year-old grandson take part. Let's see, what should the grandmother of "a Jesus" wear? Something appropriate for the honor of the position. The gray skirt and that long-sleeved blue blouse? Yes, that will do.

I arrive early and watch the audience come in: mothers balancing babies on their hips or herding toddlers. Fathers and mothers taking an hour away from their jobs. And, yes, other gray-haired grandparents.

We find seats in the sanctuary and watch the children come in, by classes, in a variety of costumes. There's Joey in a white robe, so handsome, so young.

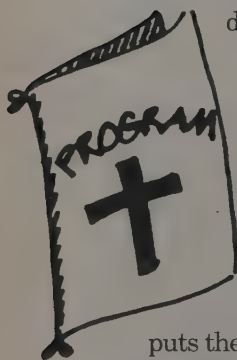
The program begins. A group comes onto the platform in the center of the church to act out the scene while a student reads a simple version of the event being portrayed. A second student reads a brief prayer applicable to the event and to our lives.

Another group takes the stage, and the Second Station of the Cross is depicted. I'm caught up in the unfolding of the story.

Then it's time for Joey's class. A big-boy soldier puts the crown of thorns on Joey's head while Joey tries to balance the heavy cross. He is struggling with it...*why doesn't someone help him?*

My throat fills, my eyes fill. Why is this rush of emotion swamping me? I think I know why. God has surprised me with this visual reminder of the suffering of his Son, sacrificed because of God's love for me. Now I know that I am not only grandmother of "a Jesus," but I am also God's redeemed child.

Margery Warren
Omaha, Nebraska



The Surprise of Your Life

A significant surprise happened to me in a fast-food place several years ago. They were having a promotion game that offered “big bucks” to a few lucky winners.

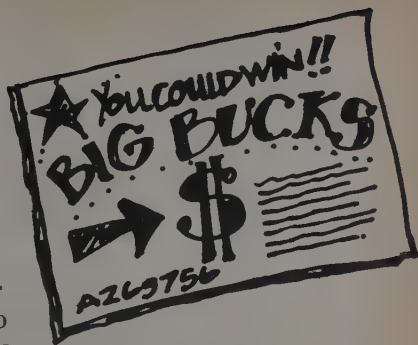
The first time I saw the promotion, I was given a game piece that said something like, “Surprise! You are the winner of an amount of money each month for months.” It sounded too good to be true, so I quickly looked at the publicity literature and saw something about needing three matching pieces to win. I was in a hurry to eat, so I threw away the game piece and forgot about it.

On later stops I looked into the rules more carefully. To my surprise I discovered a few exceptions to the “three-pieces-to-win” rule. I had thrown away a winning ticket.

Mary Magdalene (see John 20:1-18) also encountered a surprise at the tomb of Jesus that first Easter morning: It was empty. She ran and reported to Peter and John what she assumed meant yet another heartbreak on top of the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus—the theft of his body. She didn’t understand that she was the first witness to the most spectacular surprise ever known to humanity—the coming-alive of Jesus Christ. In despair she returned to the tomb to weep and later looked inside, seeing and questioning the angel messengers who sat there. As she turned away from them, Jesus appeared to her in person, to speak her name, to acknowledge her, and to authorize her to announce the resurrection to the disciples.

I missed out on the prize in the fast-food restaurant, but the loss hasn’t affected my life adversely. That prize pales in comparison to the new life that was secured for us all by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—the events that culminated in Mary’s awesome encounter with the risen Lord at the garden tomb. The wonder of wonders is that even we who are disciples of Jesus now, so long afterward, share in his coming-alive experience by the gift of God’s grace in baptism. The surprise of our lives is that Jesus loves us just as he loved Mary Magdalene, and sends us out to let everyone know about the new life our Savior offers.

*Delpha Mattison
Sioux Falls, South Dakota*

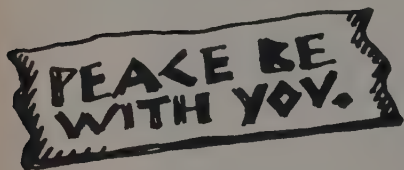


(continued)

Thank You, God, for Your Surprise to Me!

The day was cool and cloudy, almost mirroring the grief and heaviness of my heart. Mourning the loss of a child has to be one of life's loneliest, most painful processes! Was this to be another day when memories would overwhelm me and tears would again flow?

I could procrastinate no longer; the downstairs storeroom had to be cleaned. "Work is therapy," I thought to myself as I attacked the job before me.



To my surprise, an old Sunday school project came to view. Tucked behind jars of pickles and jam was a wall hanging that a young boy had brought home for his mother. The message, cut from leather strips in boyish fashion

and securely fastened to a birch board, stated simply, "Peace Be with You."

I clasped the 20-year-old leather-and-birch gift tightly to me. My mind quickly drifted back to the night a phone call awakened me. "Mom, Wes passed away." The hesitant voice of my daughter-in-law continued, "He had a heart attack while playing hockey. The doctors worked on him for two hours but couldn't save him."

My reaction to the loss of my only son was total disbelief. Wes's father had passed away in like manner. "Dear God," I cried in anguish, "you can't take Wes from us, too. He's only 33 years old, and we all need him, especially his two little children!"

I was reminded of the women who found the tomb empty after Jesus was crucified. An angel told them not to be afraid. Then suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Peace be with you" (Matthew 28:10). These words, as though a miracle message from above, brought a sense of peace to my heart.

God met me that day with a blessed surprise! God's Easter and resurrection message of hope became gloriously mine. There are yet lonely days, but I can pray, "Thank you, God, for your surprise gift of hope and peace to me!"

Sylvia Engen

Camrose, Alberta, Canada

Surprised by...a Sign

John 20:1-18

God surprised me. It is August 30. School has started. Posted on the large glass window of the college's Child Development Center is a sign in bold blue letters:

NEEDED: SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

Must be over 18 and have credentials.

I am over 18. I retired at the end of May and I have creden-

tials. For 40 years I was a public school educator.

On a whim I open the door and say, "Do you take retired school teachers?"

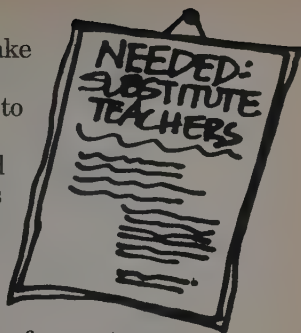
"Oh, yes! This is ideal for you—if you want to travel or go see a grandchild, you can."

All summer, after retiring, I listened and looked for direction. Never in my wildest dreams did I consider walking into a day-care center and applying for substitute teaching!

But, "Dear God, thank you! It feels right. Our two grandsons are one and three years old.

"This is your time—KAIROS time. It is time for me to continue ministry in daily life as a retired educator, wife, mother, grandmother, and preschool teacher. Amen."

*Clarie Renslo Streng
Mesquite, Texas*



Life in the Slow Lane

After years of planning for his retirement, my husband, Paul, finally got to celebrate life in the slow lane. He loved every minute of it.

A month later, my supervisor called me into her office to tell me to clear off my desk and pack up my personal belongings. I was being laid off from a job I loved. I was devastated.

My first thoughts were of Paul and me spending 24 hours a day together, every day. I was having a hard time adjusting to Paul's retirement, and now this. My outburst surprised even me as I told a friend, "This can't happen now. Paul and I will kill each other." I meant it.



It didn't take long for me to realize I was wrong. Paul and I could be together 24 hours a day and could even enjoy each other. Weekend work was done during the week with coffee breaks taken less often than when we were employed. Visits to our children and grandchildren became less stressful as we turned a four-hour journey into seven hours. Garage sales and antique shops beckoned us along the way. The word *volunteer* has taken on new meaning as we become more involved with others.

Yes, I was surprised when Paul and I were given a new life together in retirement. Thank you, God.

*Joyce M. Oltrogge
Readlyn, Iowa*

The Weight of Love

Seven years flat on his back in bed
Bob's body, she says, is turning to stone
She suctions him as often as twelve times a day
resorting, here near the end, to stratagems:
hose behind her back
hard rubber block for his mouth
All he can do is clamp down hard

For the past five years Bob's bed has been in the
living room
where precious little living has transpired
Before all this he wielded tubes of his own:
anesthesiologist in the hospital
saxophone in Saturday-night pick-up bands

He used to talk so sweet, Lucille says
to the background noise of his groaning
how mellow his voice once was, she remembers,
while rushing to suction once more

It's been three years since anyone else could
understand him
It may be my imagination, she confesses
but I think I am tuned to the nuances of
his groans

Two Sundays ago Bob aspirated a tooth
When he arose from the anesthesia
she was in another room
He flailed his arms frantically
She came rushing in

It's okay, honey. Everything is going to be all right
Lucille always told the truth. Bob settled down

And down
And farther away
And finally gone

At his funeral, Lucille reminds everyone who will listen
The only problem Bob will have in heaven, she says
is needing some help with his crown
There'll be so many jewels, she tells us
he won't be able to hold up his head

We who have been watching sense another problem
When Lucille herself gets to heaven
the angels will groan as they bring her more jewels
and Bob will come rushing to help carry her crown

*David Trembley
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

My Smile Is Different from the Inside

Danette M. Griffith

I have a different smile. It started five years ago when I was diagnosed with a benign pituitary tumor. In order to remove it, the surgeons made an incision above my teeth. This allowed them to go through my sinus cavities and reach the tumor located behind my eyes and below my brain.

It was just one year into my marriage. With the support of my husband, and our loving family, friends, and our church, we survived the surgery and recovery, confident we were done with it. Subsequent scans and MRIs showed no reoccurrence. Until this summer.

In absolute shock I listened as my neurosurgeon showed me the tumor on the scan. It wasn't large; he felt he could reach most of it and suggested I have surgery again, and this time follow up with radiation therapy. I agreed.

The surgery was the same. The surgeon cut above my teeth and went through my sinus cavities. But this time, when he stitched me back together, he did it differently and now when I smile, it feels different. It feels different in a lot of ways.

At this point in my life, at age 32, I really hadn't expected to have faced two major surgeries. And I hadn't expected to be on medication for the rest of my life.

**What we plan
and what we expect
aren't as important
as God's will for us.**

After the first surgery I was blessed with the knowledge that God is in control of our lives. What we plan and what we expect aren't as important as God's will for us. I also learned God provides what we need to get through. And I was blessed by the prayers and support of the community of believers. After my first experience I could smile with relief and happiness because I knew God was in control.

However, this second time, my experience has been more difficult. I have felt great fear for myself and about my future. I'm

scared. It's a fear of pain, a fear of another reoccurrence, a fear of the radiation therapy.

I am learning again. I'm learning that since God is in control of all things, including the future, all we have is the present moment. We don't have the future; we've lost the past. One of my pastors said that Jesus' resurrection is not only about our future life, but about the moment we have now. The resurrection can be a very real thing for us every day. It enables us to take seriously the words of the psalm that says, "Be still, and know that I am God."

My fears about the future are real, but they also prevent me from thinking about the joy of the present. Because, you know, I *can* smile. It's different all right. There's a little bit of pain in it, and a little less innocence. My smile also shows a lot more confidence in the present, because I have the resurrection now and I'll have the resurrection forever. **G**



Danette Griffith and her husband, Steve, are members of Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran in Prior Lake, Minnesota. Both work at

Lutheran colleges in Minnesota. They are grateful for the visible signs of God's presence on earth—their family and friends.

*In a time of sadness,
two surprises.*



Colors of Hope

Susan Straney

I first noticed the absence of color. Flames and smoke left everything black. The cheerful apartment filled with green plants and the aroma of coffee was gone. Anything still left was wet from the firefighters' hoses.

My husband and I went into his mother's home with boots and gloves and flashlights. We went with the determination to find something—anything—that would memorialize her 85 years of a life, a life senselessly snuffed out by the fire. I wondered where God had been in all this. Why

did God let this happen to her? To us?

"All I want is the box of old photos," one granddaughter said. "Don't count on it," we cautioned. "Anything paper will be burned or ruined by the smoke and water."

We were not prepared for the kind of devastation we saw. Ordinary household things had melted into ghastly shapes. Water dripped from kitchen drawers. The wallpaper hung in twisted strips. Her pillow had exploded. Odors of the incinerated stuff of living—furniture, carpet, paper—blended into a sour stench.

A china cabinet pitched forward, heaving its contents to the spongy floor below. Dozens of bone-china cups, collected for so many years, were trampled. We managed to find six cups and their matching saucers, no small miracle in the eyes of her six grandchildren.

On the opposite wall, the cabinet that held the books and games and grandma-things still stood. Opening it, we found what we expected—charred, wet, ruined testimonies of visits and sleep-overs. On the bottom shelf, my husband knocked at a blackened box of crayons with his flashlight. The cover of the box responded to the nudge, crumbling away. Forty-eight perfect crayon tips colorfully pointed out. We wondered at how this could be, how fragile, wax crayons could have survived the intense heat. But as we stared at the rainbow hues, we realized that the Lord's presence, God's eternal promise of loving care, was being shown to us in this simple, tangible sign of hope.

Later we found her wedding rings, and then a set of silver flatware in a swollen wooden chest. We managed to gather enough mementos to fill four small boxes. It was hardly enough to mark the years we had known her, and all the years she lived before any of us were born. And there were no photographs.

That same day, a box of photos turned up at the funeral director's office. A family friend had borrowed them two weeks before the fire and thought my husband and his brother "might like to have them." Her apologies for keeping them so long were overdone. Think what might have happened had she returned them earlier! The photos became for us another promise of God's care.

Death tasted like ashes that February Wednesday—sodden and cold, silent and black. There were no answers to the question in our hearts: Why? Maybe there would never be any answers. Yet, among all the devastation, we knew God was there, enfolding us in loving arms, comforting us in our grief. We had witnessed the Easter promise poking 48 colors strong from a box of crayons.

And, because someone borrowed and returned a box of old photographs, hope will be felt by another generation. Hope of dying and rising reflected in sepia-toned images of all those who have lived and died—and hoped—before us. **G**

Susan Straney of Saline, Michigan, is a freelance writer and a lay minister in her parish. Married for 32 years to Mike, she's a mother of four and a grandmother of four.

Recycled Rainbows

Ellen Fackler Gamrath

Hope and healing can come from the most unexpected—and the most surprising—sources.

They came to me during a period of overwhelming fatigue that left me in a zombie state after a mastectomy and six months of chemotherapy for breast cancer. My impaired immune system sharply restricted my contact with people. An eight-week regimen of radiation still lay ahead. How could I face it?

My husband, Jim, and I decided we needed a change of surroundings. We drove several hours north from Seattle to our daughter Linda's home in rural northwest Washington. Linda and our four-year-old granddaughter were waiting outside for us. My granddaughter Claire immediately pressured me to take a short walk with them. "We can turn around any time," she said.

We headed out on a road that bordered the fields of their neighbor's dairy farm. It was a crisp, cloudless afternoon that hinted the approach of autumn. For the first time in many weeks, I looked up at the sky. Flocks of finches circled overhead, gathering for migration. Soon they would be on their way to sunny winter-free places. Sighing deeply, I took a breath of fresh country air. No! My nostrils burned with

the pungent odor of cow manure.

Suddenly, I heard a loud whirl. Along the field large sprinklers with pressurized hoses began shooting streams of brown liquid up into the air. As the murky mixture arched high against the sky, I realized the hoses were spraying diluted cow dung for fertilizing the corn. Then, a surprise! As the slanting afternoon sun highlighted the streams of manure, each arc was embellished with a rainbow, a beautiful color spectrum echoing life in all its aspects.

The texture of our days is not "either-or" but "both-and"—a mixture of manure and rainbows. All of life is a precious gift from our Creator. **G**

*Ellen Fackler Gamrath—
pictured here
with husband,
Jim, and
granddaughter,
Claire—is
a member of
St. Andrew's
Lutheran in
Bellevue,
Washington.
Claire is one
of four grandchildren.*



One More \$urprise

Ruth Stenerson

One of our most beloved contemporary hymns is John Ylvisaker's "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry." What words can be more comforting than "I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old"—provided we recognize the voice of the one who speaks? Who but God could speak these words?

From the very first words of the song, we recognize the voice of a loving, listening God speaking to the baby's first cry with the assurance that the same voice will speak at that soul's dying moment, with the promise of "just one more surprise."

It is an anxious moment in the birthing room when parents and medical staff wait for the cry of the baby being pushed from the safety and warmth of the womb into a startling new world. How they welcome that borning cry! It means life. When all goes well, each hearer rejoices—including the unseen presence.

From the very first words of the song, we recognize the voice of a loving, listening God.

That presence will follow the little one through baptism. As the nurses wash the little body and clothe it, so in baptism there are cleansing and clothing in the

righteousness won by the redeeming love of God's own son. ("You are marked with the cross of Christ forever.")

At the time of my brother's death, my sister-in-law asked me to bring a greeting from the family to those assembled for the memorial service. As I pondered what words might be comforting to us all, the words of "Borning

Cry" came to me and I read them over and over. They would speak to all of us.

"I'll be there" is the promise for the child in those years when faith is easy, simple, and the child receptive, trusting. Then come the years of testing when new ideas and behaviors tantalize. The world is so exciting! The new may seem to put in question what has been accepted so trustingly in childhood.

Those who watch prayerfully understand. They, too, may have, in some "blaze of light," wandered off where the glare of strange lights tempt, "where demons dwell." Their choices may have included the forbidden and dangerous. Still the voice reminds, "I am here."

The voice comes again with its invitation and encouragement. Spiritual nourishment in home and church bears fruit, and the heart responds with praise and gratitude. Always "I'll be there," the voice proclaims. Guided by parents and teachers, we can say more than "I *hope* so" about a living relationship with God. We can say, "I *know*."

The middle ages of life? Psychologists and counselors talk about mid-life crises. Adults measure their achievements against their expectations, and are not always satisfied. In these middle moments, too, we are promised, "I'll be there."

Years go by, with a little more awareness of dusk, of the coming of night. The voice whispers, "I'll be there

I was there to hear your boming cry, I'll be there when you are old. I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold.

I was there when you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well; in a blaze of light you wandered off to find where demons dwell.

When you heard the wonder of the word I was there to cheer you on; you were raised to praise the living Lord, to whom you now belong.

If you find someone to share your time and you join your hearts as one, I'll be there to make your verses rhyme from dusk till rising sun.

In the middle ages of your life, not too old, no longer young, I'll be there to guide you through the night, complete what I've begun.

When the evening gently closes in and you shut your weary eyes, I'll be there as I have always been with just one more surprise.

I was there to hear your boming cry, I'll be there when you are old. I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold.*

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to guide you through the night." God's work will be completed, whether or not we can understand all that means in the lives of those we love, or in our own. "I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion..." (Philippians 1:6).

Yet again, at death, the voice says, "I'll be there as I have always been." And there will be "just one more surprise."

One more surprise. "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived," (1 Corinthians 2:9), God will reveal to us then.

John Ylvisaker's father, the beloved Carl B. Ylvisaker of Concordia College's (Moorhead, Minnesota) Department of Religion, slipped away for his revelation of "one more surprise" while I was one of his students. Now his son in "Borning Cry" reassures me—and all of us—that God will be there for us, too, all the way. What greater surprise is there than to realize, as does the unicorn in C. S. Lewis's *Narnia*, "I have come home at last. this is my real country! I belong here." **G**



Ruth Stenerson is professor of English emerita of Bemidji (Minnesota) State University. She is an active volunteer and is president of First Lutheran Church's (in

Bemidji) women's organization. A book of her devotions titled Echoings is published by LangMarc Publishing (San Antonio, Texas).

Twice Blessed

Kathryn Lay

On the day my husband and I learned of our imminent adoption of our daughter, we took our closest friends out to dinner in celebration. After years of infertility and prayers, after eight months of parenting classes, paperwork, and home studies, we were full of joy.

While we laughed and talked at the restaurant, I became aware that an older couple sitting in the booth behind us laughed and nodded knowingly as we voiced our excitement and nervousness.

When the couple behind us left their booth, they paused at our table.

"Congratulations," the woman said, patting my shoulder. She leaned closer and said, "I have several children of my own. I have a granddaughter who was adopted by someone not long ago. I've never seen her. Hearing your excitement, I feel in my heart that somewhere she is loved and well taken care of by a family like yours."

Patting my shoulder once more, she whispered, "I'll pray for you and your baby."

At a time when we were blessed and overflowing with joy, God put us in a place where we could be a blessing and comfort to another. I pray for that grandmother, that God will continue to give her peace and comfort for the granddaughter she wonders about. **G**

Kathryn Lay, Bedford, Texas, is a full-time writer.

Where Are the Signs?

Recently I attended a synodical convention at one of our ELCA colleges. The campus is an oasis of loveliness within the community. With its well-maintained buildings, its beautiful landscape, and the clusters of students studying or playing ball on the greens, it is a perfect advertisement for college life.

But I was forever getting lost! There were no direction signs anywhere. Did I want to know how to get to the bookstore? To the auditorium where the convention was meeting? Or to the student center for meals? I had to ask someone for directions every time.

It was as if the people who live and work and study there were saying, "We know where everything is, and that's all that matters. We don't need signs or arrows to find our way. This is *our* place, and we know our way here." Perhaps no one had actually ever thought like that, but that's what it felt like to me.

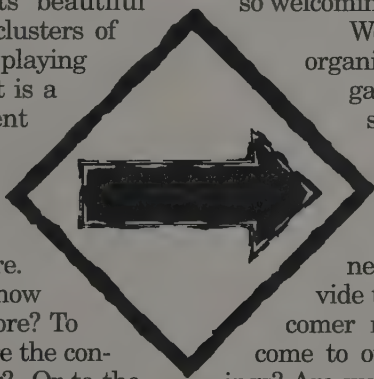
Does the church ever feel like that to newcomers, to those who do not "belong"? Do we do everything we can to make people welcome? Or do we use code words (like WELCA or SWO) that keep other people out?

When I first moved to Chicago and was looking for a new church home, I was surprised at how unwelcome I felt in many of our congregations. I finally chose Norwood Park Lutheran because everyone was so friendly, so welcoming.

We need to look at our organization, at our congregational units, and at our synodical organizations (those famous SWOs) with the eyes of the outsider: Do we reach out in friendship to the newcomer? Do we provide the information a newcomer needs to find us and come to our services and meetings? Are we a welcoming place or group? Do we make sure that new members of the congregation are invited (and yes, *brought*) to a meeting of the organization by other women in the church?

What kind of signs do we have in our church and in our organization to guide the newcomer, to welcome the stranger who enters our worshipping community? Let us try to remember what it feels like to be the newcomer, and let us put up the signs of welcome and direction everywhere!

Charlotte E. Fiechter
Executive Director
Women of the ELCA



Triennial Convention In-kind Gifts

One way triennial convention attendees and those who participate at home can "Proclaim God's Peace" (the convention theme) is through donations of in-kind gifts, including:

▲ **Peaceable Books.** Each triennial convention participant is asked to bring to the convention one children's book that relates to peace. The books will be donated to agencies, libraries, and shelters in the Twin Cities area. The books should be inclusive in language and art.

To participate at home, congregations could mount their own peaceable book drive and donate books to organizations in their communities. Questions? Contact Faith Fretheim at Women of the ELCA, (800) 638-3522, ext. 2736.

▲ **Pieces of Peace.** Each convention participant should bring one 22" x 22" square of 100% cotton fabric to the triennial. During the convention, at the Lutheran World Relief (LWR) area in the "Proclamation Station" (exhibition hall), the squares will be transformed into quilts. The quilts will be donated to LWR and to Twin City area shelters.

The square might be a simple piece of cloth, or it might be creatively designed with peace symbols. If the square is decorated, a half-inch seam allowance should be reserved on all sides.

Perhaps an intergenerational quilting bee could also be scheduled in congregations for July 14. Questions? Call Anna Belle Thiemann at Lutheran World Relief, (212) 532-6350.

▲ **A Personal Offering.** Several thousand participants will offer a very personal gift at the triennial convention's Health Fair—a blood donation.

Consider mounting a congregational blood drive July 11-14. Questions? Contact the American Red Cross, or call Marlene Joseph at Women of the ELCA, (800) 638-3522, ext. 2738.

If your congregation holds an in-kind gift campaign in support of the triennial convention, tell Women of the ELCA about it. Send a postcard to Bonnie Belasic, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4189. **AC**

For a convention registration booklet, call (800) 638-3522, ext. 2730.

Titles Suggested for In-kind Books

Early Childhood Books

- Be Good to Eddie Lee* (Virginia Fleming, 1993)
God's Paintbrush (Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, 1992)
Just Like Us (Hiawyn Oram and Daniel Baird, 1988)
One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads (Johnny Valentine, 1994)
Smoky Night (Eve Brunting, 1994)
Street Rhymes Around the World, (Jane Yolen, 1992)
Ten Little Rabbits (Virginia Grossman and Sylvia Long, 1995)
A Country Far Away (Nigel Gray, 1991)
The Great Peace March (Holly Near, 1993)
Hats, Hats, Hats (Ann Morris, 1989)
Mama, Do You Love Me? (Barbara M. Joosse, 1991)

Elementary Books

- Andrew's Angry Words* (Dorothea Lachner, 1995)
The Lotus Seed (Sherry Garland, 1993)
Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes (Eleanor Coerr, 1979)
Secret of the Peaceful Warrior (Dan Millman, 1991)
Somebody Loves You, Mr. Hatch (Eileen Spinelli, 1991)
The Table Where Rich People Sit (Byrd Baylor, 1994)
Talking Walls (Margy Burns Knight, 1995)
Chi-Hoon: A Korean Girl (Patricia McMahon, 1993)
Faithful Elephants (Yukio Tsuchiya, 1988)
I'm In Charge of Celebrations (Byrd Baylor, 1986)
Latino Rainbow: Poems about Latino Americans (Carlos Cumpian, 1994)
The Lorax (Dr. Seuss, 1971)
Old Turtle (Douglas Wood, 1992)
The People Shall Continue (Simon Ortiz, 1988)
When Africa Was Home (Karen Lynn Williams, 1991)

Young Adult Books

- Grab Hands and Run* (Frances Temple, 1993)
Guests (Michael Dorris, 1994)
Letters from a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs (Mary E. Lyons, 1992)
Peace and Bread: The Story of Jane Addams (Stephanie Sammartino McPherson, 1993)
Potter (Walt Wangerin Jr., 1994)
The Well: David's Story (Mildred D. Taylor, 1995)
It's Our World, Too! Young People Who Are Making a Difference (and How They're Doing It) (Phillip Hoose, 1993)
Just Like Martin (Ossie Davis, 1992)
Local News (Gary Soto, 1993)
Who Do You Think You Are: Stories of Friends and Enemies (Hazel Rochman, 1993)

Niki Amarantides: Literacy Revolutionary



Niki Amarantides

Linda Nansteel Lovell

As a Christian in the workplace, Niki Amarantides is talking revolution. Not the kind that leads to gun battles and overthrown governments or long-running Broadway musicals, but the kind that transforms people's lives. Niki Amarantides is talking literacy.

Since 1991, this 43-year-old Lutheran, a member of Ascension Church in Baltimore, has been working full-time on behalf of adults who do not know how to read. "I think part of the deal of being a follower of Jesus," she says, "is that we put ourselves in what might initially be uncomfortable situations, because, if left to our own devices, we would insulate our-

selves from the world and from suffering and from those who appear to be different from us."

Amarantides credits the writings of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire with helping her understand that literacy is not just about reading. "Literacy also has as part of it that you change your children's life, your neighborhood's life, and, if you're lucky, your national landscape as well. It's about effecting change and finding a voice," she says, "because, really, people who can't read are voiceless."

With this attitude of revolution, Amarantides set out to live her faith through her work as a full-time literacy professional. Initially, she coordinated a grant that provided training for longshoremen and other Port of Baltimore workers whose jobs were threatened by mechanization. In December 1994, she began work on a federally funded three-year grant under the National Workplace Literacy Grant Program. With two other women, she works in partnership with Essex Community College, the Maryland Hospital Association, and 13 Baltimore hospitals.

The purpose of this new project is to provide literacy training to workers whose job requirements are changing drastically as hospitals reengineer, downsize, and restructure. These are really the salt-of-the-earth folks who have come to work year after year, and [now] they realize that 25-plus years of service doesn't guarantee them another day of pay."

As an example, she cites new requirements for housekeepers, who now might be doing some patient care, patient transport, and contact with the family. They also might be required to note on a computer whether beds have been changed or what supplies are needed.

Thanks to the workplace literacy grant, Amarantides and her co-workers meet each student, offer testing and counsel-

Could You Be a Literacy Volunteer?

What does it take to be a literacy volunteer? Niki Amarantides's answer may not be what you expect.

The most important quality a volunteer needs is the right personality. "You can't have any sense of condescension," she says. "Adult education is based on the premise that we are all learning together, that you have one set of experiences and I have another, and we're going to swap our knowledge."

For a person who is a non-reader, admitting to the problem is a frightening prospect. "Just as Jesus didn't set himself up as better than those he healed or forgave," she says, "so a literacy tutor has to be someone who says, 'Your secret is okay with me, and we're going to figure this out together.'"

Another important quality for a volunteer is a flexible attitude and a willingness to work with a variety of materials. The most successful volunteers are those who are "constantly inventing" new approaches to teaching reading.

Finally, Amarantides stresses, volunteers have to be willing to commit to "the long haul." Generally, a child is expected to make one grade level of change after 1000 hours of instruction. An adult tutoring relationship is not a "six-month, once-a-week kind of thing," Amarantides says, but an extended process that may take years.

Women of the ELCA Connections

Churchwide Women of the ELCA provides a variety of information on literacy, including statistics, literacy facts and myths, "how-to"s for tutors, helps for setting up a literacy or family literacy program, and more. The organization also has a number of packets on literacy available, the most recent of which is "From Idea: To Reality."

Two videos are available for loan (for postage costs) from the churchwide office: "Not a One-Way Street" and "R.O.A.R.—Reach Out And Read" on family literacy. Call Faith Fretheim at (800) 638-3522, ext. 2736, for more information.

ing, and develop an individualized education plan.

For Amarantides, the essence of literacy work is that it is transformational, not just for the learner, but also for the literacy worker. "I just can't be working for something that doesn't effect change in some way, whether in an individual's life or in a systemic way," she stresses.

Christians are called on "to do basically what Jesus did," she feels, "which was not to hang out with the rich and the powerful and to acquire a comfortable life, but instead to connect with the marginalized people who could see the kingdom of God in a clearer way." And that's just what Niki Amarantides intends to keep on doing as she lives out her faith each day. **AC**

Linda Nansteel Lovell is the communications coordinator for the Delaware-Maryland Synod and synod correspondent to The Lutheran. She, her husband, Alan, and daughters, Meredith and Jocelyn, are active members of First Lutheran in Ellicott City, Maryland.

RESOURCES RESOURCES RE

How are congregations equipping members for living out their faith in the world? Four new resources are available from the ELCA Distribution Service at (800) 328-4648, ext. 631:

"Working: Making a Difference in God's World" is a resource notebook packed with ideas that work. It contains Bible studies, stories, sermons, starter exercises, programs, and projects that help

Lutherans prepare to live out their faith in the workplace, the community, and the home. It comes with an audiotape of 16 Lutherans telling their faith stories, along with a transcript and guide for use (Code LT69-9815, \$25.75).

The audiotape, transcript, and usage guide described above are also available separately from the resource notebook. (Code LT69-9813, \$11).

Ielene Kedda, Literacy Volunteer in Wilmington, Delaware

In recognition of almost 10 years of commitment, Wilmington resident Ielene Kedda was nominated to be National Literacy Volunteer for the Year for 1995. She began working with LVA (Literacy Volunteers of America) in the fall of 1986, teaching reading to adults. About 1989, she switched to teaching ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), which she continues to do today.

The Literacy Volunteers of America program coordinator in Delaware nominated Kedda for the national honor especially for her skill in teaching ESOL, a task Kedda approaches with real passion. "I think the biggest thrill I've had is when a student, originally from mainland China, came to me with tears in her eyes and said, 'We couldn't have made it without your help.'"

Kedda's literacy work goes well beyond simply teaching reading, however. Teaching English as a second language is teaching living skills as well, she says. Laughing, she recounts the variety of topics she's taught through reading: grocery shopping, home repairs, legal affairs, road maps, surgery, pregnancy, and cooking.

This past October, she hosted a complete Thanksgiving dinner for a Chinese family, including visiting in-laws from Hong Kong. Who cooked the turkey? Kedda's literacy student, who wanted to help her family experience a special meal in the United States. As Ielene Kedda says, being a literacy volunteer leads her down "every avenue of life."

Kedda is a member of the Mary Circle at Hope Lutheran Church, an ELCA congregation in New Castle, Delaware.



Ielene Kedda

RESOURCES RESOURCES RESOURCES

"Living Faithfully: Ministry in Daily Life in the ELCA" is a report booklet resulting from more than a year of research into how the church equips its members for ministry in daily life. It contains photos and stories of people living out their faith, as well as observations and statistical data (with usage guide, code LT69-6300, \$4.50).

"Living Faithfully" is also the name of a 14-minute videotape produced by the same researchers who prepared the report. Lively, colorful, and inspiring, it is an excellent discussion starter for adults or youth (with usage guide, code LT69-6301, \$12).

Brief Prayers on News Items

Sonia C. Solomonson

Your daily prayer list

What news stories caught your attention in the last few days? Don't let the plethora of bad news immobilize you. Rather, add some of the people and concerns about which you've read to your prayer list. You might pray for:

- Children whose lives have been touched by murder and violence.
- Refugees, for whom daily existence is difficult work, and for whom hope is a slender thread.
- Women who are victims of rape as a weapon of war.
- The "disappeared" in many countries, whose families have no idea of their fate.

LWF challenges churches to ensure women's "genuine participation"

Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, challenged Lutheran churches around the world to examine their structures to ensure that women have "genuine participation." Noko said he wasn't speaking of "cosmetic changes" but of "changes that involve building awareness and genuine participation."

O all-embracing God, use us as instruments for change so your church might embrace all your children.

European Christians celebrate religious tolerance

Christians from throughout Europe celebrated last fall in Torun, Poland, an historic 17th-century effort to restore church unity. Lutheran, Calvinist, and Roman Catholic theologians met there 350 years earlier, failed to restore unity, but became convinced that it's better to discuss confessional differences than go to war over them.

God of peace, show us better ways to bridge the differences that divide us.

Wheelchairs don't slow down Seattle couple

Alan and Sharon King, married more than 10 years and both confined to wheelchairs, are among the most productive, active members at Faith Lutheran Church in Seattle, Washington. They've taught adult forums, read the Scriptures, and taught member parishioners how to paint with their feet. For its emphasis on full participation of members with disabilities, Faith Lutheran won the 1995 ELCA Accessibility Award.

Remind us, O God, that we have varying degrees and different types of ability and disability, and we all are loved by you.

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